DATELINE NO. 78: ALEXANDRIA, VA.
ALINA ZERANSKI MAY 5, 1976

RESTORATION OF A NATIONAL SHRINE
(INSERTS IN TAPE LIBRARY)

ANNCR: AND NOW, THE VOICE OF AMERICA PRESENTS DATELINE...ANOTHER IN THE SERIES OF PROGRAMS ABOUT PEOPLE, PLACES AND EVENTS HERE IN THE UNITED STATES -- BROUGHT TO YOU BY THE VOICE OF AMERICA EACH WEEK AT THIS TIME. TODAY'S DATELINE IS ALEXANDRIA, VIRGINIA, WHERE WE VISIT A CHARMING OLD HOUSE WHICH WAS THE SCENE OF GALA EVENTS, REVOLVING AROUND THE MOST FAMOUS FOUNDERS OF AMERICAN INDEPENDENCE.

HARR: THE OLD TOWN ALEXANDRIA IS GETTING LOVELIER EVERY DAY. NOT JUST BECAUSE IT IS SPRING AGAIN AND CAMELIAS ARE BLOOMING IN THE TINY OLD-FASHIONNED GARDENS. ALMOST EVERY MONTH SOME NEW HOUSES ARE RESTORED TO THEIR ORIGINAL BEAUTY IN THIS VIRGINIA TOWN WHICH WAS FLOURISHING LONG BEFORE THE CITY OF WASHINGTON WAS BUILT ACROSS THE POTOMAC RIVER. ALEXANDRIA WAS ONCE A STOPPING POINT ON IMPORTANT CROSS-ROADS. STATESMEN, DIPLOMATS, GENERALS AND WEALTHY MERCHANTS ARRIVED BY STAGE-COACH TO ENJOY THE WARM HOSPITALITY OF THE FAMOUS GADSBY'S TAVERN. ALL THE OFFICIAL GUESTS OF THE FAMOUS NEWBORN COUNTRY WERE ENTERTAINED HERE. THEY SIPPED WINE AND GROG, THEY DINED AND DANCED IN THE TWO BALLROOMS. THEY SLEPT IN TINY LOGING ROOMS. GADSBY'S TAVERN WAS RECENTLY RETURNED TO THE PUBLIC. PART OF IT IS NOW A MUSEUM, BUT YOU CAN STILL TASTE COLONIAL DELICACIES SERVED BY WAITERS IN 18THCENTURY COSTUMES IN THE SAME CHARMING DINING ROOMS.

NARR: (CONT'D) WILLIAM ADAM, CURATOR OF THE MUSEUM, TALKS ABOUT HIS FAMOUS BUILDING WHILE YOU CAN HEAR THE WORKERS AT THEIR STREET BEAUTIFICATION TASK OUTSIDE.

TAPE: CUT ONE -- ADAM

"YOU MUST ENVISION A BUILDING THAT WAS THE SOCIAL, POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC CENTER OF A PRE-REVOLUTIONARY COMMUNITY IN AMERICA. THE WORD TAVERN IS OFTEN A MISNOMER. PEOPLE THINK OF DRINKING AND DEBAUCHERY AND ALL THAT SORT OF THING. BUT A TAVERN IN THE 18TH CENTURY STATUS, PARTICULARLY IN ALEXANDRIA, WAS A VERY IMPORTANT ADJUNCT TO THE COMMUNITY. AND SOME OF THE MOST IMPORTANT THINGS IN OUR HISTORY WERE TRANSPOSED IN OLD TAVERNS. ALEXANDRIA WAS A VERY IMPORTANT SEAPORT TOWN...AND MANY, MANY OF THE FOUNDING FATHERS AND PATRIOTS STOPPED IN ALEXANDRIA, LEFT THEIR IMPRINT IN THIS OLD TAVERN."

NARR: AS IT HAD HAPPENED TO SO MANY PLACES, ALEXANDRIA WENT THROUGH A PERIOD OF DECLINE. THE MORE AFFLUENT POPULATION STARTED MOVING OUT. THEIR ONCE LOVELY HOMES BECAME OLD AND NEGLECTED. BUT IN RECENT YEARS, WITH THE GROWING INTEREST IN THE AMERICAN HISTORICAL PAST, ONE BY ONE, THESE 18TH CENTURY, GEORGIAN BUILDINGS WERE RECLAIMED. THE TREE-LINED STREETS, THE BRICK PAVED SIDEWALKS, WROUGHT IRON GATES AND WALLS COVERED WITH IVY ENHANCE THE ATMOSPHERE OF EARLY AMERICA. AND IT IS AMONG THESE RELICS OF THE PAST THAT YOU CAN FIND GADSBY'S TAVERN.

TAPE: CUT TWO -- ADAM

"THE CITY OF ALEXANDRIA ACQUIRED THE TWO HISTORIC BUILDINGS THAT COMPRISE THE GADSBY'S TAVERN IN 1972 FROM THE AMERICAN LEGION, WHO PURCHASED THEM IN 1928 TO PRESERVE THEM AND KEEP THEM FROM DESTRUCTION. THE MUSEUM IS COMPOSED OF TWO 18TH CENTURY BUILDINGS. THE ARCHITECTURE IS IN THE TYPICAL STYLE OF THE SCOTTISH SKETCHBOOKS...ONE LITTLE BUILDING WAS AN EATING AND DRINKING PLACE. WE HAVE A BEAUTIFUL OLD 18TH CENTURY TAP ROOM, A DINING ROOM AREA... THEN WE HAVE A GAMING ROOM...AND THIS PROVIDED A MEANS FOR THESE MEN TO GET TOGETHER AND DISCUSS THEIR BUSINESS AFFAIRS, THEIR POLITICS AND THEIR SOCIAL AFFAIRS. ON THE SECOND

TAPE: (CONT'D) FLOOR OF THIS EARLIER OF THE TWO BUILDINGS, IS THE ASSEMBLY ROOM WHERE SOME OF THE DOCUMENTS THAT LED TO THE REVOLUTION AND THE DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE WERE DRAFTED, INCLUDING GEORGE MASON'S FAMOUS FAIRFAX COUNTY RESOLVES THAT LED TO THE DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS. IN THE ATTIC OF THE EARLIER BUILDING WE HAVE THE LIVING QUARTERS OF THE INN KEEPER AND HIS FAMILY. THEY ARE VERY MODEST, VERY SIMPLY FURNISHED. NO HEAT ON THE THIRD FLOOR. THE HEAT WAS DERIVED FROM THE BIG ASSEMBLY ROOM ON THE SECOND FLOOR."

NARR: GADSBY WAS A GREAT INN KEEPER. MANY EUROPEAN TRAVELERS RAVED ABOUT HIS MAGNIFICENT FOOD AND WINE CELLAR. HIS TAVERN WAS ALSO THE FAVORITE PLACE OF GEORGE WASHINGTON WHO PATRONIZED THE LITTLE COFFEE HOUSE AS EARLY AS 1754. GENERAL WASHINGTON LOVED TO DANCE IN THE GREAT GADSBY'S BALLROOM. HE USED TO COME HERE TO MEET WITH JOHN ADAMS AND THOMAS JEFFERSON. AND IT WAS HERE THAT A HOMECOMING BANQUET WAS HELD IN MARCH 1797, AFTER HIS TWO TERMS AS PRESIDENT. STANDING IN THE GADSBY'S TAVERN DOORWAY, HE REVIEWED TROOPS IN 1798. A CITYWIDE TRIBUTE ON HIS BIRTHDAY WAS HELD IN THE BALLROOM, STARTING THE TRADITION OF YEARLY CELEBRATIONS OF WASHINGTON'S BIRTHDAY WHICH CONTINUE TO THE PRESENT DAY.

TAPE: CUT THREE -- ADAM

"WASHINGTON CAME TO MOUNT VERNON AS A TEENAGER, AND HE ADOPTED ALEXANDRIA AS HIS HOME TOWN...FROM THAT POINT UP INTO SOME OF THE MOST OBNOXIOUS, DECISIVE EVENTS OF HIS LIFE, ALEXANDRIA TO SOME PART PLAYED A MAJOR ROLE IN THESE HAPPENINGS. AND MANY OF THESE THINGS TOOK PLACE RIGHT HERE IN THE GATSBY'S TAVERN. IT IS A GREAT MAGNIFICENT THING. IT IS A GEM OF THE 18TH CENTURY GEORGIAN A ARCHITECTURE."

NARR: IT TOOK ONE AND A HALF MILLION DOLLARS TO RESTORE THE TWO GADSBY'S RED BRICK BUILDINGS. IT WAS FUNDED BY FEDERAL, STATE AND LOCAL MONIES, BUT THE ANTIQUE FURNISHING ALL CAME FROM PRIVATE DONORS. A VOLUNTEER GROUP OF ABOUT 150 PERSONS, CALLING THEMSELVES THE FRIENDS OF GADSBY'S TAVERN, KEEP THE INTEREST IN THIS NATIONAL SHRINE ALIVE. MANY AMONG THEM ARE OUTSTANDING ART COLLECTORS. THEY HANDLE THE ACQUISITION OF FURNISHINGS, ORGANIZE EDUCATIONAL AND ARCHEOLOGICAL PROGRAMS, TRYING TO RECOVER THE LOVELY PIECES OF FURNITURE AND OBJECTS OF ART FROM THE ORIGINAL TAVERN, DISPERSED IN MUSEUMS AND PRIVATE COLLECTIONS. RECENTLY, THE FIRST LADY, MRS. GERALD FORD, AS HONORARY CHAIRMAN OF THE FRIENDS OF GADSBY'S TAVERN, UNVEILED THE 18TH CENTURY MANTEL, RETURNED BY THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART IN NEW YORK.

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ANNCR: THIS HAS BEEN DATELINE -- ANOTHER IN THE SERIES OF PROGRAMS ABOUT PEOPLE, PLACES AND EVENTS IN THE UNITED STATES. JOIN US AGAIN NEXT_____(AT THIS TIME) FOR ANOTHER.... DATELINE. THIS IS_____.

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